

THE ORANGE COUNTY BETA REGISTER

Irvine schools weigh \$7 million in last-minute cuts

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2009-06-22 03:00:00

IRVINE - Irvine Unified School District leaders faced with a sudden \$7 million shortfall are weighing a series of last-minute cuts that would raise class sizes, lay off temporary teachers and eliminate adult education programs.

Days before local schools ended for the summer, and less than a month before district leaders are required to get their annual budget to the Orange County Board of Education, state officials informed Irvine Unified that they would be stripping the district of "excess" property tax revenue, district spokesman Ian Hanigan said.

"In an ideal budget world, you make your cuts back in March and April, and you spend this time of year planning," Hanigan said. "Now we're in June and having to make \$7 million in reductions. This is just unprecedented."

The school board will decide Tuesday whether to sign off on the following cuts:

- Ending 20-to-1 class-size reduction efforts in first, second, third and ninth grades. Class sizes would rise to 24 or 25 students in the first- and second-grade classes, 25 or 26 students in the third-grade classes and 25 students in the ninth grade. The district would cut the equivalent of 32 full-time positions from the temporary teacher pool. The district would save a little less than \$2 million.
- Delaying the adoption of new textbooks, saving just under \$2 million.
- Making \$200,000 in unspecified cuts to art, music and science programs.
- Making \$200,000 in unspecified cuts at the district office.
- Making about \$94,000 in cuts from parent English tutoring programs.
- Eliminating adult education, saving about \$190,000.

The district would raise about \$1.8 million by dipping into a reserve fund for retiree benefits. They are also looking to begin negotiations on salary rollbacks and furloughs.

"At this stage of the game there is no low-hanging fruit," Hanigan said. "Everything on this list is significant."

The additional cuts come four months after Irvine Unified leaders sliced \$11 million out of the district's budget.

The board will discuss the cuts, as well as the overall school budget, at 5 p.m. Tuesday at the Irvine Unified School District offices at 5050 Barranca Parkway.

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